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REEL # 69

GRAND JURY REPORTS OF  
CIRCUIT COURT OF WICOMICO COUNTY  
FEBRUARY TERM, 1986  
SEPTEMBER TERM, 1986  
FEBRUARY TERM, 1987

**STATE OF MARYLAND**

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HR-RM 26  
(5-1-54)  
Hall of Records Commission

## Report Of The Grand Jury

FEBRUARY

TERM, 19 86

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT  
FOR WICOMICO COUNTY  
STATE OF MARYLAND

TO

THE HONORABLE, THE JUDGES OF SAID COURT

The Grand Jurors of the State of Maryland, for the body of Wicomico County, and of the aforesaid Term of the Circuit Court for Wicomico County, pray leave to submit the following Report:

FILED  
SEP 26 9 02 AM '86  
A. JAMES SMITH, CLERK

The Grand Jurors for the February (1986) Term of Court were convened on February 10, 1986. Richard Phillips was designated foreman of the Grand Jury, by the Court. Charles Bounds agreed to serve as Secretary of the Grand Jury at the request of the State's Attorney. The Jurors were informed that the September Term Grand Jury had been extended in service to conduct further proceedings in regard to their inspection of the Wicomico County Courthouse. The Grand Jurors of the February Term elected not to conduct an elaborate inspection of the Courthouse, in view of the parallel efforts of the September Term Grand Jury. In view of the fact that further inspection and report is being done by the September Term Jurors, the February Term Grand Jury will not make any comments or recommendations concerning the Court House itself.

On February 10, 1986, the Jurors conducted an inspection of the Wicomico County Detention Center. During that inspection, the Grand Jury found the Detention Center (jail) to be clean and in good order. Cell areas are dark and crowded, but otherwise appear to be in good condition for a facility as old as the jail which was never designed to hold as many prisoners as are currently being held. The Grand Jurors learned that jailers have encountered problems as a result of a change of policy by the District Court Commissioners whereby Commissioners (who set bond and perform other preliminary functions when a person is arrested) no longer will come to the Detention Center to conduct their preliminary inquiries. Instead, jailers now transport each new prisoner to the Commissioner's office, where the preliminary proceedings are held. This has resulted in expenditure of more funds than anticipated on overtime pay for jailers who must be called in to either transport prisoners or to cover for others while they transport prisoners.



During the Grand Jury's proceedings on February 10, a prisoner escaped from Court Room Number One, where he was scheduled for trial. The escapee fled from the Courtroom and jumped out of a window on the third floor of the Courthouse.

On Tuesday, May 20, 1986, the Grand Jury conducted an inspection of Poplar Hill Pre-Release Unit, a facility of the Division of Correction located in Wicomico County. The Jurors observed that the physical facilities at Poplar Hill appear to be in good condition and are well-maintained. The Superintendent of the facility informed the Grand Jurors that Poplar Hill had requested funds to replace some of the kitchen equipment. The Grand Jurors inspected the equipment and did not find it to be in such a state of disrepair as to require replacement expenditures.

The Grand Jurors learned that many prisoners at Poplar Hill are released from confinement under a Work Release Program. These inmates go to work at regular jobs within the community during the day and return to Poplar Hill in the evening. They are required to reimburse the State for the cost of meals and lodging at Poplar Hill, out of their pay. The Grand Jurors also learned that visiting privileges at Poplar Hill are permitted only on Saturdays and Sundays, and that several inmates have work release jobs that require them to work on the weekends. Several such inmates complained that no specific arrangements are made to provide visiting privileges for them and that, since they are required to work on weekends, they are, in effect, denied visiting privileges.

Testimony was presented to the Grand Jurors by the Warden of the Wicomico County Detention Center and by a person who had been sentenced to serve 15 weekends in jail. This person had reported to the Detention Center, as required,

on Friday evenings. On three different occasions, he was told that there was no room for him in the jail and he was turned away. The Warden informed the Grand Jurors that similar incidents had occurred several times between the end of January and early March, 1986, but that he did not learn of the incidents until early March. On none of the occasions was any report made to the Judge who had imposed the sentence, until one of the Judges learned of the situation and called for an explanation. The Warden advised the Grand Jurors that arrangements had been made with the Worcester County Detention Center, for that facility to handle the overflow from the Wicomico County Detention Center when space is available in Worcester County's jail. When the jail in Worcester County is filled, the Warden advised that the only place he is able to take overflow prisoners is to the County Jail in Cecil County. The Grand Jurors learned that the arrangements with Worcester County have been in effect for some time, and were in effect in January and February, 1986.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Grand Jurors recommend that procedures be re-established to provide that District Court Commissioners go to the Detention Center to conduct their initial appearance interviews with persons arrested and incarcerated on weekends and holidays and after 4:30 PM on weekdays, and that suitable facilities be provided for such interviews by the Detention Center.
2. The Grand Jurors recommend that plans for a new County Detention Center include the providing of suitable facilities for the conducting of initial appearance interviews in the Detention Center by District Court Commissioners.
3. The Grand Jurors recommend that the Warden of the Wicomico County Detention Center establish clear written policies and procedures requiring that he be immediately notified whenever the Detention Center receives an incoming prisoner for whom there is no room, prohibiting any correctional officer from refusing to accept any incoming prisoner lawfully presented for confinement, and

requiring the Warden to consult with the sentencing or committing Judge whenever, for whatever reason, the Detention Center is unable to accomodate a person sentenced or committed to jail.

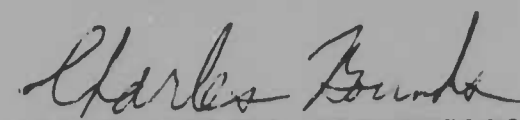
4. The Grand Jurors recommend that the Warden of the Wicomico County Detention Center establish clear written policies and procedures to be utilized whenever the Detention Center is so overcrowded as to be unable to accomodate incoming prisoners, to provide an established plan for the incarceration of such incoming prisoners at other facilities or for the transfer of other prisoners to other facilities to make room for incoming prisoners.

5. The Grand Jurors recommend that the County government explore with the State government the feasibility of housing Detention Center inmates on work release status at Poplar Hill Pre-Release Unit when overcrowded conditions at the Detention Center require transfer of prisoners to other facilities.

6. The Grand Jurors recommend that the Superintendant of Poplar Hill Pre-Release Unit make provisions for visiting privileges to be afforded to inmates whose work release jobs require them to be working during regular visiting times.

Respectfully submitted,

  
RICHARD PHILLIPS, FOREMAN

  
CHARLES BOUNDS, SECRETARY



## Report Of The Grand Jury

SEPTEMBER TERM, 19 86

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT  
FOR WICOMICO COUNTY  
STATE OF MARYLAND

TO

THE HONORABLE, THE JUDGES OF SAID COURT

The Grand Jurors of the State of Maryland, for the body of Wicomico County, and of the aforesaid Term of the Circuit Court for Wicomico County, pray leave to submit the following Report:

FILED  
DEC 15 3 32 PM '86  
A. JAMES SMITH, CLERK

The September, 1986, Term of the Grand Jury for Wicomico County was convened by and received its charge from Hon. Alfred T. Truitt, Jr., Judge of the Circuit Court, on Monday, September 8, 1986. Judge Truitt appointed Ferne K. Wilce to serve as forelady of the Grand Jury. Subsequently, Calvin E. Young was designated as Secretary of the Grand Jury.

During its term, the Grand Jury conducted inspections of the Wicomico County Courthouse, the County Detention Center, and Poplar Hill Pre-Release Unit.

#### I. THE WICOMICO COUNTY COURTHOUSE

A. OBSERVATIONS. The Grand Jurors found the County Courthouse to be a deplorable facility. Virtually every office in the Courthouse is severely overcrowded. The working conditions in the Courthouse are not conducive to good employee morale or efficiency of operation.

1. The Central Alarm office appears to the Grand Jurors to be shorthanded and in need of at least one additional person to handle the volume of work.

2. The Sheriff's Office is severely overcrowded and fragmented. The employees of the Sheriff operate out of at least three separate locations. The Sheriff's Office is located in cramped quarters in the basement of the Courthouse. Deputies assigned to Court Security are housed in an office located on the second floor. Those assigned to Criminal Investigations are located in an office on the third floor at the front of the building. Such fragmentation cannot be conducive to effective supervision or operation.



3. The Civil Defense Office is severely cramped and located in an area in the basement that more closely resembles a medieval dungeon than an office.

4. The Law Library is severely cramped for space and fragmented. Some publications are kept in an office area on the second floor. The library itself is at the opposite end of the building on the first floor.

5. The Register of Wills Office appears to have adequate employee working space but is rapidly running out of space for storage of records. This problem is being partially addressed through microfilming of records.

6. The Clerk of the Circuit Court's Office is crowded and cramped in all areas but the room used as a front desk area. Space for storage of records is rapidly diminishing.

7. The State's Attorney's Office is severely cramped for space. There is not sufficient space to enable each attorney to have a desk, much less any appreciable degree of privacy for consultations with witnesses or others.

8. The Grand Jury Room is much too small for comfortable seating of 23 persons. The large table in this room is in a disgraceful state of deterioration.

9. The Judge's Chambers appear to have adequate working space for secretaries. The offices of the Judges, however, are small and barely adequate to serve their function.

10. The Grand Jurors observe that the Courthouse would make a beautiful museum, but in its present state does not serve as a suitable facility for the functioning of the departments which it houses.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS. The Grand Jury recommends

1. That the need for additional personnel in the Central Alarm office be closely examined and that adequate personnel be provided to

3. The Civil Defense Office is severely cramped and located in an area in the basement that more closely resembles a medieval dungeon than an office.

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B. RECOMMENDATIONS. The Grand Jury recommends

1. That the need for additional personnel in the Central Alarm office be closely examined and that adequate personnel be provided to

enable this office to perform its vital functions with efficiency.

2. That the Sheriff's Office be provided with more suitable facilities with adequate working space and centralization of all functions except Court Security (which, of necessity, must be located near the courtrooms).

3. That the Civil Defense Office be relocated to larger and less depressing quarters.

4. That a coat rack be installed in the foyer leading into the Grand Jury Room.

5. That the deteriorating veneer covering of the large table in the Grand Jury room be re-glued to the table top before it deteriorates any further.

6. That the County undertake a survey of all furniture in the Courthouse to determine whether any other furniture is in need of repair or replacement.

7. That action be promptly instituted by the County to renovate and enlarge the County Courthouse.

8. That the State's Attorney make this Report available to our successors, so that they may inquire into whether corrective measures have been taken.

## II. THE WICOMICO COUNTY DETENTION CENTER

A. OBSERVATIONS. The County Detention Center, formerly known as the County Jail, is a severely overcrowded and depressing place. Recognizing that jail is not intended to be a pleasant place, the Grand Jurors nevertheless feel that incarceration in the Wicomico County Detention Center borders on cruel and unusual punishment.

1. The Detention Center, during the term of the Grand Jury, is



housing far more prisoners than the facility was designed or intended to hold. As a result, the cells are overcrowded. A foul odor permeated the jail during the Grand Jurors' inspection.

2. The cell areas are dark and depressing.
3. Ventilation in the jail is very poor.
4. The Grand Jurors observed that the cell areas were very dirty and did not appear to have been recently cleaned.
5. Recreation and exercise for prisoners is very minimal and is limited to a small exercise area within one of the cell blocks. No outdoor recreation is provided.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS. The Grand Jury recommends

1. That the Warden of the Detention Center explore the feasibility of using the roof of the building for controlled outdoor recreation, or using other suitable outdoor areas for supervised recreation and utilizing recreation periods for an opportunity to clean and disinfect cell areas.
2. That prisoners be required to take a minimum of one shower every two days.
3. That the Warden explore with the Board of Education the feasibility of setting up programs whereby high school students are given an opportunity to tour the jail and get a first-hand look at what jail is really like.

III. POPLAR HILL PRE-RELEASE UNIT

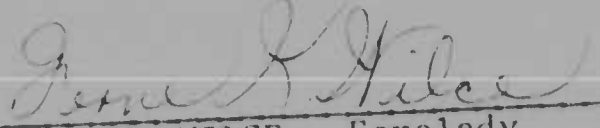
A. OBSERVATIONS. The Poplar Hill Pre-Release Unit is a facility operated by the Maryland Division of Corrections located in Wicomico County. The facility appeared clean, in good repair, and adequate in size. During the Grand Jury's inspection, the Grand Jurors observed that windows in the

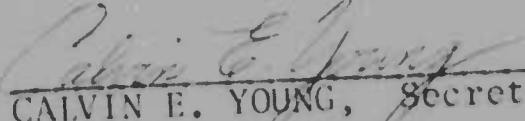
Day Room, where an orientation lecture was given, were covered over with opaque brown paper. The Grand Jurors were advised that this covering is placed over the windows on visiting days to preclude prisoners who are outdoors from peering in the windows and interfering with the privacy of visits. The appearance of this covering was completely out of character with the appearance of the rest of the facility.

The Grand Jurors are disturbed by instances, reported to them at Poplar Hill and during presentation of cases for indictment, where inmates escape from custody after being granted work release or other broad freedom and just before they are scheduled for parole or full release. It appears to the Grand Jury that some prisoners are given great temptation to walk away from custody before they are psychologically equipped to resist such temptation.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS. The Grand Jury recommends

1. That outdoor security lighting be promptly installed in and around all vehicle parking areas.
2. That the Division of Correction furnish Poplar Hill with venetian blinds or drapes for use in place of paper covering of windows.
3. That psychological counseling and screening of inmates be provided at Poplar Hill and required before granting work release to inmates.

  
FERNE K. WILCE, Forelady

  
CALVIN E. YOUNG, Secretary

# Report Of The Grand Jury

FEBRUARY

TERM, 19 87

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT  
FOR WICOMICO COUNTY  
STATE OF MARYLAND

FILED  
Nov 15 2 45 PM '87  
CLERK. WICOMICO CO.

TO

THE HONORABLE, THE JUDGES OF SAID COURT

The Grand Jurors of the State of Maryland, for the body of Wicomico County, and of the aforesaid Term of the Circuit Court for Wicomico County, pray leave to submit the following Report:



The February, 1987, Term of the Grand Jury for Wicomico County was convened by and received its charge from the Honorable D. William Simpson, Judge of the Circuit Court, on Wednesday, February 11, 1987. Judge Simpson appointed Howard Roberts to serve as Foreman of the Grand Jury. Subsequently, Wesley Wilkerson was designated as Secretary of the Grand Jury.

During its term, the Grand Jury conducted inspections of the Wicomico County Court House and the Wicomico County Detention Center.

#### I. The Wicomico County Court House

##### A. Observations.

The Grand Jury found the County Court House to be in deplorable condition. Each and every office therein is severely overcrowded and thus is not conducive to good working conditions.

1. Central Alarm (Emergency Communications) operates a very sensitive function. The Grand Jury finds that the expansion plan for the Court House could well cause disruption in this service, thus creating the potential for a catastrophe.

Every consideration should be given to removing Central Alarm from its present location during the construction process.

2. Sheriff's Department is severely overcrowded and fragmented. A great concern is the proposed plan to keep the Sheriff's Department in the Court House. It is the recommendation that the Sheriff's Department be moved to a new location, possibly near the new Detention Center, as soon as possible.

3. The Civil Defense Office is severely cramped and does not appear to be useful in a crisis situation.

4. The Law Library should be moved from its location on the first floor (thus taking space which could be utilized by offices) to a location which is convenient to both lawyers and the courts.

5. The Register of Wills office appears to have adequate space at the present time, but space for records storage in the future is non-existent.

6. The Clerk of the Circuit Court's office is crowded, especially in the land records unit. The storage facility in the basement is deplorable.

7. The State's Attorney's Office is severely cramped for space. Office space for attorneys must be shared and is open to the public, thus creating problems with witness interviews, etc.

8. The Grand Jury Room is very small and will not seat twenty-three persons comfortably.

9. The Judges' Chambers are not commensurate with their positions. Evidence of insect infestation is apparent. Evidently the air conditioning does not cool in the summer and the boiler doesn't heat in the winter.

b. Comments and Recommendations

1. The Grand Jury commends the County Council for proceeding with a Court House renovation.

2. The Grand Jury is disturbed, however, that Emergency Services and especially the Sheriff's Department will remain in the building.

3. The Grand Jury strongly recommends that Emergency Services be housed in a separate facility devoted to that function specifically.

4. The Grand Jury strongly recommends that Central Alarm be moved during the construction phase.

II. Wicomico County Detention Center (Jail)

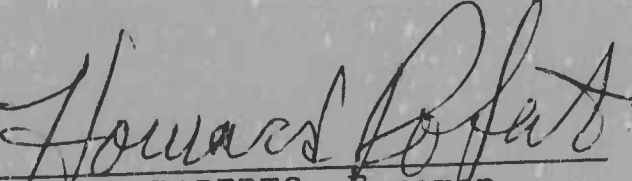
A. Observations.

The County Detention Center is severely overcrowded and thus constitutes a threat to the personnel who work there. The lack of space creates hostility between the inmates that carries over to the guards. During this term of the

Grand Jury, a fire was started in the Detention Center, thus forcing at least the possibility of evacuation.

B. Recommendation

The new Detention Center needs to be opened as quickly as is humanly possible.

  
HOWARD ROBERTS, Foreman